tional goods, facilitating consignment exports under the debt repayment route and having long term trading arrangements in agreed commodities.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Ban on Export of Molecules

622. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to ban on export of Molecules under Test, the domestic Pharmaceutical Companies who have received export order over Rs. 300 crores for supplying Sildenafil Citrate, are facing lot of difficulties in fulfilling their commitments with the importers;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering lifting of ban on export of these Molecules;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERECE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HAGDE): (a) There is no ban under the Export and Import Policy on the export of Molecules under Test and therefore export of Sildenafil Citrate is also not banned. However, the export orders of Sildenafil Citrate are held up because of suspension of issue of 'No Objection Certificate' by the Drug Controller General of India in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare pending receipt of clarification of prevalent regulations to manufacture this drug for export purposes.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Decline in Price of Rubber

623. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the price of natural rubber has declined and the farmers are facing serious crisis;

(b) if so, the details of decline in price and the steps taken to maintain remunerative price;

(c) whether Government have received any representations in this connection and if so, the details of the request;

(d) whether Government have directed the STC to procure rubber; and

(e) if so, the details of procurement made during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (e) Yes, Sir. The price of natural rubber (RSS-4) which was around Rs. 30 per kg. in July, 1994, touched more than Rs. 60 per kg. in June, 1995. However, the price of NR started declining steadily since then and after November, 1996 the decline has been sharp. The price of Natural Rubber on 23.2.99 was Rs. 2850 per quintal.

The Govt. of India, on receiving representations from several Members of Parliament as also from Govt. of Kerala, requesting for Government intervention to check the declining prices of rubber in the domestic market, had, in August, 1997 and May 1998, directed State Trading Corporation to procure upto 10,000 MT and 20,000 MT of Natural Rubber respectively on Govt. account.

As on 12.2.99, STC has procured 8737 MT of Natural Rubber against the ongoing procurement operations. This is in addition to 9596 MT of NR procured during 1997-98

Import of Tea from Sri Lanka

624. SHRI PRAFUL GORADIA:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to permit import of tea at concessional duty rates from Sri Lanka;

(b) whether Government are aware of